

ISGQ-2003-M0007740 (in progress)

Male 1

...And the person who was out to have a couple of drinks with his friend didn't stop his program. Baghdad's streets were filled with cars. I told you this before. And you know it. So don't hit anyone.

We'll tell him that our people are... I mean we don't have oil and we don't need it. We'll just use it for our local needs, and Iraq will live, just like it did in the past, without oil. It was a strong country that had influence. So there's no motivation or reason to convince us to go on with you.

So this is the situation, don't look at it as a threat and don't consider us stubborn. Give us our rights and we'll keep working with you. If you don't then we'll part ways...

Just like I explained to the president yesterday at the cabinet meeting, we worked with Ekeus [Rolf Ekeus, UN Rapporteur on Iraq 1991-97] a lot. And we had some differences.

In the past when we had some differences and argued, he used to respond. He would blame us, make it our fault. He said that we were late. That he received the file on August 4th and he needs time. I told him that it doesn't take time, that what he received and the statements that I gave him should be enough for him to go and say that the main objective has been achieved. It may not be enough to verify every detail; but details don't hold any value. Meaning that at the end, he will come to the same conclusion that we were discussing at that time, that Iraq doesn't have anything that is banned. Just like what happened with the other issues.

But at the same time he said that they would work fast. He also said that the information he was given were important. And the statements that I gave him about biological weaponry are important and convincing. He used these two words. He said he will work on it, and that we need to work together, but he didn't commit that at the end of August he will present something satisfactory to the Security Council, something that would meet our demands. He committed himself to sending a team that would verify the information. He is supposed to come on the 15th, and according to Lt Gen 'Amir, he postponed until the 22nd. He also said that he would come to Baghdad before the end of August to supervise the team and the talks, and also to come up with political results.

I encouraged him to do that and told him that it was necessary. I said that we shouldn't leave the issue in the hands of the technical staff because that might take time. Some issues are important to them, a technical issue that might be of secondary nature might be important to a technical person. He might take his time to know the result. But for us politicians, we can tell if it was important or not and he agreed. And I believe that there's reference to this issue in the press conference.

This, sir, is the conclusion. So we can say that he listened to us. He got the message, so we can say he sees it clearly now, because the meeting was with me, the Minister of Oil and the Foreign Minister, the three people that follow the file. And from your speech on July 17th, the general atmosphere and the media are prepared to get the message.

During our talks with him, he never used any word that we can describe as harmful or accused us. Even though I was tough with my talks with him. The language I used was of course political, but it was also tough. With the exception of him saying that he got the file on the 4th...

By the way sir, I forgot to tell you yesterday, I told him that I wanted to explain one thing. Which is why we gave him the biological file in July, not before. We talked about the biological file and I gave you answers. I told him that I do not apologize for the answers that I provided about the biological file for the following reasons:

First of all, ever since he started working, we never had anything that was banned by resolution 687. I didn't feel obligated to tell you such and such because we don't have anything.

We met a lot in '91, '92 and '93. Especially in '93 when he came in July. He never talked about the biological. He wasn't interested in it. We talked about missiles and chemicals. We talked about resolution 715, about the inspections. But he never brought up the biological issue. I told him that he brought it up in the fall of 1994. I said that in '94, there were big hopes that things will develop in the direction of lifting the embargo.

When he brought up the biological issue, I told him that I take responsibility, me, Tariq 'Aziz. I told my comrades not to give Ekeus any new information because I started doubting him. I told him that whether it was you behind this, or some other parties, what's important is that I'm now doubting your intentions. Even though you got new information, it doesn't change the fact that we don't have anything. Reopening the file... the missiles file and the chemical file were open, the inspections back then were ongoing and you said they're not working as intended yet, so why are you opening a new file. So I was doubtful. I forgot to show you this page yesterday sir, I told him go back to your French friends. Go back to my talks with Alain Juppé [EN: French Foreign Minister 30 march 93 – 11 May 95] in December.

My talks with him, the French Foreign Minister, had a lot of doubts about you because of this behavior. I told him that I came back to Baghdad in April and I was really disappointed in your intentions. Because even in April, you kept all the files open. So how can we work with you on another file, while the other files that we all know are ready and finished are open.

After you submitted your report in June, we had expectations that the biological file can be dealt with in the same manner. So I told him that this is my explanation. So I said this is the situation Mr. Ekeus, everyone should look after his position. You have enough time to think about it, and this is our decision and where we stand.

This is the conclusion sir.

Male 2 Comrade Foreign Minister, do you have anything to say?

Male 3 Like the Prime Minister mentioned. The main point that Ekeus refused to be clear about was committing himself to a timeline. He stated to the media before this meeting that he is hoping it would be soon. The American ambassador

asked him last March about how long he expects dealing with the biological issue will last. He told her a short period of time.

So in general, after he admitted that the explanations that are based on facts presented by Mr. Tariq are very important and convincing.

It seems to me that the way he wants to deal with the issue, or the way he is told to deal with the issue, is to keep any piece of information presented to him by the Iraqi side within an understanding that Iraq wants to produce a biological weapon. He thinks that Iraq has a strategic policy that requires this kind of weapon.

The thing is he doesn't want to shut it down with chains. Even if we told him that our policy is strategic, or that we had a plan that was never carried out, to have it as a defensive weapon, his concept is just to help him finish the file. He will say that if there was a plan that was devised and then started, then tell me where the armament took place.

You do remember sir that when he submitted his report on June 19th, the main issue that the American experts and their likes could use, was if they can use it as an armament issue. It will turn into an issue that won't be resolved in months.

So when he was talking to the Prime Minister, he tried not to commit to a timeline in order to get to a conclusion that allows them to demand a concept called the armament.

This is the point sir, and Dr. Tariq covered the meeting very well. But as long as he doesn't give an answer, it will remain an issue between us.

Everything they say on the technical side is... it is true there are a lot of details the Minister of Oil can go over, but this issue is more dangerous in my opinion. If we can resolve it with him, our position will be a lot stronger.

So if you don't come to a conclusion with him about this issue, the explanation he heard from Dr Tariq was convincing according to him. He will work with us based on the fact that the technical issues presented to him, most important of which is that in the fall of 1990 we destroyed whatever we made, only then the concept of armament can be closed. If we come to an agreement with him about what I mentioned to you sir, if we can get him to accept the main issues that Dr. Tariq brought up, that will allow him to say before the end of August that all the main issues are clear and that he has no more doubts about them. That he considers them solved. He can say that there are some details that we need to work on with the Iraqis.

So if we take what he already said in his report about the chemical weapons in June, and we replaced every "chemical" with "biological", this problem would be solved.

He said that the main issues are solved, and that there are some details that can be worked out. He never made a promise because I think he wants to emphasize the concept of armament. If he ever finds any word that has to do with armament, the biological file will never be closed, and that's the American plan, not to lift the embargo for a long time.

So I suggest that in the coming days we concentrate on this issue in particular. We shouldn't say anything about the concept anymore. And I suggest that we

answer any more inquiries from his people with “we don’t have anything to add to what the Deputy prime Minister already told you”.

The other thing we need to do is to get him to concede that the main issues have been resolved, and in return we’ll say that we agree to continue working with him on the details.

If we follow this direction sir, I think that by the end of August we can accomplish the goal that you set.

Thank you sir.

Male 2 Even if he wants to come to an agreement, if he doesn’t realize the dangers of his behavior that I will explain, him and others will always try to push the talks about August to the back end.
He keeps proposing cooperation issues in a way that doesn’t disrupt our work, but is not decisive. It offers theoretical not tangible progress. So he needs to understand this. Comrade Tariq’s issue with him is clear. And we always need to emphasize this issue. This is what we think about all of it.
Yes comrade ‘Amir.

Male 4 Thank you sir.
If you like we can talk about the technical side of the talks with Ekeus.
At the beginning of the meeting we explained the Iraqi stand very clearly and accurately like Mr. Deputy Prime Minister said. He said that he understands because he heard the president’s speech and read the statements of other Iraqi officials, so he understands the importance of speed in resolving the biological file.
But he said that he had some main points he needs to address.
First he said, there are a lot of details that need to be included in the final and complete Iraqi statement, these details need to answer the queries that we had in the previous visit of the inspection team. For example, production details, civil engineering details, people’s details, decisions details and import details. He said and I quote “I want it very detailed”.
Another point he brought up about the contents and advancement of the program, he said there are some contradictions and some things that are not logical. He also emphasized the issue of armament decisions, and he said some technicians are hiding some information. And that they are hesitant in giving some of the information about the program as a whole.
The third issue is what he called “the material balancing for the cultured medium”, there are quantities imported for the biological program and also used for other things not related to the biological program. They were received. So the production that already took place needs to match what is stored right now, there are a lot of details, but he basically said that there should be a balance in this issue.
The main and last issue is verifying the accuracy of information announced by the Iraqis. He says that this requires field verification, meetings with people, calls to foreign companies and other parties. So he can verify that the Iraqi announcement is complete, comprehensive and final.

So to summarize things, when it comes to details, we told him that we have already provided all the details that we can to the inspection team in the previous meeting. Even if those details have nothing to do with the Security Council resolutions, even if they have nothing to do with the biological program, even if they are insignificant, we still gave them all the details that we could. The things that we couldn't provide, we didn't. Our goal in this issue was to resolve everything so that there are no more excuses for any delays, and we don't have anything to hide so we're giving you all the details. We also told them that we made our experts available to them to address their concerns about the other programs, especially in the chemical program. And that's why you see the director of the chemical program sitting before you along with the biological so he can help with this issue.

About the issue of contradictions and holding back information, I told him that we have a clear direction from the leadership to provide you with all the information. We didn't tell our technicians to hold back. So this issue doesn't exist, I told all the technicians to provide you with all the information you need about the biological program. So we told him not to say that we need more directions with this issue.

The issue of the information being illogical, we talked about the Industrial Institution and the industrial sectors and how they work and how you support them. We explained how we don't devise a complete plan for a project from start to finish; we usually start a project and see how it's progressing and then go one step at a time. So I told Ekeus that these facts that I explained to him might not be how they do and plan things in the West, and might not even be similar to how the nuclear group works in Iraq itself, and not even the way the other ministries work in Iraq, but this is the situation. So I asked what is required of us, to give you only the facts that meet logic, or all the facts even if they might not seem logical. We gave all the facts. If that's going to affect our position negatively then we need to be clear about it. For example, he brought up the issue of the production duration for the "cultured mediums" that were used to produce biological agents seems too short. So he said how did you manage to produce these quantities in 17 to 18 months? He said did you use another site? Did you use other equipments? Is this duration incorrect? Was it longer and you shortened it? So he brought up these kinds of things. And we explained them to him in detail.

The issue of "the material balancing for the cultured medium"[24:40] is a numbers issue and it's clear, but they had issues with storage sites, some things changed. And it is true; there were some stolen materials on the local market that we recovered. So I told him this is easy to verify and I don't think it's that important.

The verification issue, which is the main and most dangerous issue that might delay the whole process, which is verifying on the field, meeting people, contacting foreign companies to verify the honesty of Iraqi announcements, as he likes to call it. We told him that even in the resolution 687, verifying is not required. What is required is to present information. If you allow me sir to remind you of the resolution 687, it says Iraq is required to present information

within 15 days. I told him we gave you more than 500 pages, verifying them is not required in resolution 687, but you want to do it to have honesty so that's why we agreed to the verification issue. You can evaluate the Iraqi information and give it some kind of credibility and then present it to the Security Council, tell them Iraq met their requirements but I need to verify the information. You have the political commitment of the Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister to cooperate with you in the verification even after implementing article 22. You've had active Iraqi action giving you information for a long time, the proof is that not even a few days ago we gave you an additional 54 pages of detailed information about the chemical program even though the chemical program has been resolved with you concerning article 22. In addition, you have the authority according to resolution 715 to request and verify, so why keep this issue unresolved and cause delays?

His opinion on this issue in particular is this, just so we can understand how our enemy thinks. His opinion is, for me to go to the Security Council I have to have a firm standing and a strong case so no one can contradict the information that I have and weaken my position. So my instructions to our technicians, and they feel the same way, is to be strict and have a high sense of responsibility. But at the same time I told them to hurry and exert more effort, but there are difficulties and you should understand them.

They did an initial evaluation in the technical meeting for more than 500 pages, it can get to 600 pages because there are documents, plans and press statements so we can prove to them that there were military threats in September, so we even got into such details.

So they gave us some observations from their evaluation but said they have to go to New York to study it and come back. And Ekeus said that he would send the team in a week. But the technicians next to him said right away that a week is not enough. So he said it might take 9 or 10 days and they didn't say anything.

After we had the political meeting that I attended, I heard him say that they will come on the 22nd, which means 16 days. So he said a week then changed it to 10 days and said the team will be there for two weeks. The goals of the team that will come for two weeks in mid August and was changed to the 22nd, they're actually 3 or 4 goals.

The first goal they said is that they will give us additional observations about the Iraqi report to complete. That way the Iraqi report can be complete and comprehensive according to them.

The second goal is the verification process through field visits, meeting with people and verifying some documents in the report. They said this would take two weeks.

So we asked Ekeus, what do you think? How are things going? And when will you be ready to report to the Security Council that Iraq has implemented what's required of it in accordance with article 22 concerning the biological file? He said he couldn't say at the moment. He will be able to evaluate the situation at the end of August. So he suggested that he would come at the end of August, and the Deputy Prime Minister agreed, to see how the team is

doing, and have a better understanding of the situation after reading the reports and verifying some things. Only then can he give a report, but right now he said he can't.

Thank you sir

Male 2 Comrade Taha Ma'ruf.

Male 4 Mr. President, Ekeus and the committee were clearer in the last visit than they were previously. What we heard from...

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Male 4 ... We have to take advantage of this short period to look like we did everything we can do up until the last second. So we can weaken the enemy's excuses that say... they stopped the special committee before it was done. The second possibility on the technical level, sir, they will do comparisons to make us look bad and say, for example, the missile file took this long to finish, and that the Iraqis destroyed such and such without the committee's supervision. They will say that we did destroy but they need to verify the quantities, then they'll say the Iraqis are now shortening the period for the biological issue. It's a logic that will make us look bad and it is possible sir. They might be just like the Russians and the French for a period of time. They all emphasized, and they're just looking after their own interests, that we should cooperate with the Special Committee and let them finish, so the French and Russians can propose implementing Article 22. So those people with hidden agendas might now find an excuse to say that we didn't meet the requirements and weakened their position. So we look into how to tactically weaken them without changing our public and firm stand. This will be beneficial. We told Ekeus when he was in Baghdad that this is it, the agreed upon time is the end of August. So it's possible that what I mentioned might affect our position. Thank you sir

Male 5 If you'll allow me sir...

Male 2 Yes

Male 5 If these are the expectations of our Foreign Ministry, then how long are we going to wait for the Special Committee? Is there a time that can be determined by the Foreign Ministry? Are they going to finish in September? October? November? Next March? How long? We've been waiting for five years. Day after day, year after year, month after month. We said until August, and this is for us so we can prepare for it. We'll go along with them, encourage Ekeus, [Inaudible].

But we should stick to our position in August when we don't see results. Does the Foreign Ministry expect the embargo to be lifted in September? Because if

we wait the month of August and the embargo is not lifted, three quarters of our boycott is wasted. If we wait two months and article 22 is not implemented, meaning the embargo is not lifted; three quarters of our power will be wasted. It won't be effective.

Male 2 Yes comrade Tariq

Male 3 Sir there's a saying that news that cost money today will be free tomorrow. So we should wait. We shouldn't assume. There are certain developments that might make us change our position, they're not in front of us now. We're here and not going anywhere. You're here and the leadership is here. The facts in front of us are what are going to tell us if lifting the embargo is possible. And 15 days after August are not enough to come back and.... Logically

Male 5 That's not considered a change in the date...

Male 3 It is not considered a change in dates, because our goal is to put them in a corner so we can see results. So I think we should continue following the situation. Put pressure on Ekeus to make the dates earlier. Last night I thought about an idea suggested by the Foreign Minister about sending a letter to Ekeus after Comrade 'Amer said he changed the team arrival date from the 15th to the 22nd. I'll tell him we had a gentlemen's agreement to rush things, the 22nd is not rushing things. I'll tell him that he should be here before the end of August. We understood each other and agreed on mutual respect and understanding of both our situations. And during this period we'll make calls and listen to what he will say.

He's going to go to the Security Council to give an oral or written report. We'll read the report and see if it has a positive or negative direction. I think that all these things will be clear in the next two weeks. We'll meet then and evaluate the situation, a tangible evaluation.

The Foreign Minister can answer the Deputy's question to the Foreign Minister, I can answer it, and you can answer it. We don't have a guarantee right now that the embargo will be lifted in September or October or November. If there were any guarantees from anyone, we would come and let you know right away. It's all guesses. I don't see a need right now to change our tactics and strategy.

And even on very high levels, I don't see a need to repeat the position. It would look like we're scared and going to back down.

I mean, the leader and President of Iraq said some things on July 17th ...

Male 2 It wasn't the time... why repeat...

Male 3 The spokesperson for the leadership, for you, told Ekeus to have everyone present. Yesterday, he went to Washington, Paris and London; by phone, that's how they follow up, Ekeus and his assistants submit reports to their friends. We get these from the Intelligence Services and...

So the things I said, and comrade 'Amir and the Foreign Minister at press conferences said the same thing, and the media, are clear.

So how are they going to act? Let's wait and see how. Today is the 7th; we'll wait ten days, 12 days, and 14 days. Things will be clearer regarding everything in the last third of August, how Ekeus will act, and how the other part will act. Especially the Americans and the other parties in the Security Council.

As far as the action plan, if you could give us a couple of days sir, before the weekend, I'll discuss it with comrade 'Amir and the Foreign Minister and we'll submit our recommendation on Wednesday or Thursday. [Inaudible]... we don't have enough time.

Male 2 The sooner the better, [Inaudible], because the time is limited.

Male 6 Sir, the indifference of the French and the Russians

[Inaudible, more than one person talking at the same time away from the microphone]

They had a joint proposal they wanted to submit to the Security Council to lift the oil embargo. But right now there are no talks about this joint proposal.

Male 2 Comrade Taha, we had several meetings until we reached this decision, it was told to the Iraq Conference and was approved. And after that, when I saw the final position on the level of the high leadership in the country and the high level in the Party, I put it in the speech and announced it to the people. The basis of the issue... why did we reach this conclusion? Because we had no choice, whether we collide with the Special Committee or the Security Council. Each one passes it to the other. The security Council says that it will not take action until the Special Committee submits its report and says that it's done. And the Special Committee makes the excuses it's been making for years. In short, this is how it was presented in previous meetings. We came to a conclusion on the level of world politics, that we can't make a mistake, not even 1%, that someone might fight for us and defend our rights. Based on this we came to a conclusion. That even those who wish secretly that the embargo were lifted need a strong Iraqi position to cause a crisis. That way they can find a better chance to ease the American pressure off of them, by saying that there is no more reason to continue with the embargo against Iraq and we should meet our commitments. So this is the summery of everything that happened. So nothing has changed. Just like the French President said, right now they consider us a country on the map, not a country with interests. A present country that has a future, nobody can deny this, enemies or friends. The proof is that the enemy is scared of us, in spite of everything that happened and still happens every day. And the friends didn't close the door for the future.

But opening this future door by those we call friends is linked to their interests. So when they have more interests with our enemies, they won't sacrifice them. They even hope for interests with a country that does exist in the world, but not in the interests because it doesn't export or import. Interests happen through imports and exports.

Ekeus and the Security Council are saying we're waiting for the committee to submit the report; this is what made us come to this conclusion.

We wouldn't have reached this decision if the Security Council discussed issues logically regardless of Ekeus' opinion, or if Ekeus made decisions regardless of pressure by some Security Council members. We would have started a logical dialogue with the Security Council, or even solved it with Ekeus based on the relationship with him.

So we've come to believe that Ekeus is not capable of making a decision, and the Security Council is not capable of making a decision. Both of them are blaming the other. The result, regardless of how different or similar the intentions are, is that the embargo is still in effect.

We presented everything we were asked to, not what we thought we should present. We don't have anything left, but still.

Time will make us stronger on some sides, things of technical nature. It will make people more understanding of our cause. The people that are not directly affected. The observers and the enemy's people. I mean, the French people will be more understanding, even though I don't have much respect for this... not because of humane reasons, I don't respect it because I know that the French people would be more understanding if their losses were bigger. So they don't support us for humane reasons, even the French people.

But from other sides, time will cost us. Any time that goes by in a country that doesn't import or export is a loss. Our people's blood, we have people dying everyday because of the embargo, isn't this also a loss? Isn't it a loss that the life of our planes is decreasing? Isn't it a loss that our missiles are living a shorter life? Isn't it a loss that our soldiers have to push their vehicles just to get to the defensive positions so they can fight? How isn't this a loss?

They get us to the point where we... they come and step on men's necks with their shoes. Every passing day is a loss. If our people including the leadership were in the spirit that they are in right now, this situation would've happened the first month after the cease-fire. It would have been better, we would have saved time. It would have taken... few months? Six months? But it would have been over with. Everyone would know his duties and what he has to do.

Isn't the number of beheadings and hand cuttings that happened because of theft a loss? Also the number of people who went bad because of their needs and the life that they couldn't stand because we have an unusual situation. It's all a loss.

Our position came at least four years too late. At least. It's these stories...

Ekeus said this and the Council said that, the Special Committee said this, this is a friend, this is an enemy, and these stories are what caused this issue to go on for five years. That and the psychological state of the leadership and the people and the armed forces.

Ok, so now everything is clear. People now are determined; people now are rejecting the false stories and the false promises. So now we shouldn't get bored or give up. We were put in this situation and forced to make this decision. It is a revolutionary, fighting, believing, and patient decision. But it wasn't by choice. No one came to us and said don't make this decision; we're going to lift the embargo. We would've said god bless you in this life and the next. So there's no hope. All these stories, week after week, month after month, year after year, it's been five years with no result. Actually it got worse. At least at the beginning our assets were not frozen, but they did that later. At the beginning some of our purchases were easier, they put obstacles and made things extremely hard to even make a deal to buy food or medicine. Nobody is offering to give us credit.

Even some of the people that used to say they would give us goods and collect payment later changed their minds. They think it's the first time because... It goes on for six months... etc. [Inaudible]

So this is it, work with your people and your party based on this. If some one were to come and say you have Ekeus' word that if you delayed your decision a week I'll implement article 22 legally, when we have such an offer, like comrade Tariq said, we'll meet and see if you guys will approve delaying for another week or not.

But for now, work based on your decision, and this decision is for the people. So prepare yourself on the party level and the people level. Depend on god first, and then prepare yourself... [Inaudible]

Male 7 Sir we will not talk about... [Inaudible]

Male 2 Up to you. Make it seem like our people are not delusional. Say that the Council and the Command reviewed what comrade Tariq 'Aziz told Ekeus about the clear position of the leadership about the relationship with the Special Committee and the Security Council, which in turn became one of the most important decisions of the 11th Iraqi Country Conference. It does no harm and no...and it's helpful for our people and who ever are receiving it abroad.

Goodbye

[TC: Inaudible, people talking in the background away from the microphone.]

[TC: Blank from minute 56:44 to the end of the audio cut]